

# Joint Congress of the Arts

## Keynote Address

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Mr. Chairman, Madam First Lady, distinguished guests and members of the Arts, I come here to address you on the state of the Arts in California, and I am pleased to report to you that the Arts have never been healthier.

Four years ago the budget for the Arts Council was \$12 million. We ranked 47th out of the 50 states in per capita funding at 38 cents. We're now at \$31 million and rank in the middle of the states.

We have the largest arts education budget in the country.

This year the Governor proposed an increase of \$27 million, which had to be reduced to \$13 million because of the challenges facing the state. Even with the reduction, no other Governor in the history of this country has ever proposed or implemented a greater increase in funding to the arts in so short a period of time as has Gray Davis.

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other state in the union.*

The Arts Education funding in just this first year, has allowed the Arts Council to fund over 200 arts education projects throughout the state - reaching into scores of communities, touching the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of our students. We now have more Artists in Residence in schools than any other state in the union.

There are more artists in California than any other state. Theatres, symphonies, dance groups, operas and museums budgets are rising, some dramatically.

Our Latino, African American, Asian, Native American and folk arts organizations continue to expand and touch the lives of countless Californians as we discover the advantage of being the most diverse place on the globe.

As my friend Angie Tahti says: we may be facing a temporary energy shortage, but there is no shortage of creative energy in California. And it is that creative energy that has made us the 6th largest economy in the world. We're fortunate, for Governor Davis knows that that creative spirit has always been our greatest asset and our biggest lure.

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We have begun to build the arts infrastructure with new funding to the service provider organizations representing symphonies, museums, dance, the presenting community, locals arts agencies, arts education groups, and for the Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, African American and native artists sectors. This is a critical first step in the organization of what I hope can become a true arts "community."

We are one of 13 state arts agencies that received a Lila Wallace / Readers Digest \$600,000 three year grant to address issues of audience development. We are creating an Arts Marketing Institute to conduct audience research, collect data, share information, and mentor arts organizations in elevating the marketing function within their hierarchies. In the next few months, I shall ask the Council to match those funds so that this initiative can have real impact in this critical area.

We have courted new partnerships and are developing meaningful alliances with the PTA, the League of Cities, the state's convention & visitor's bureaus, and the AARP.

We are working to streamline the grants process with full online application and management protocol within the next 12 months. I shall put forth to the Council for its consideration a number of changes in how we might simplify the system while maintaining its integrity, including more multiple year grants, less onerous information requirements for applicants, possible block grants for re-granting and some process that would recognize long term relationships with our stellar arts organizations.

And while I seek to make the process easier for you, at the same time I will ask the Council to require of all applicants that they partner with the CAC in a strategic approach to making sure there is local awareness of the impact of state money in individual communities, that applicants respond to our needs for information collection and dissemination, and that everyone participate in convenings designed to foster and nourish a statewide arts community that can increase our leverage.

*78% of all California citizens say they would be willing to pay \$5 more per year in state income taxes, IF that money was allocated to the arts.*

**W**e have expanded our research and data collection efforts. I asked the Council, and they approved funding for an update of the seminal 1994 Economic Impact Study.

We created a joint public / private partnership - **the California Arts Initiative** to bring the foundation / corporation communities together with the CAC to address areas of mutual concern in an attempt to create a united approach to arts organization capacity building. Charter partners the **David & Lucile Packard Foundation**, the **James Irvine Foundation**, and the **J. Paul Getty Trust** have joined with the CAC in this historic partnership approach, and I expect to announce new partners in the next few months.

We launched a major visibility effort to raise public and media awareness of the positive impact of the arts in California with the Year of the Arts visibility campaign.

As the program moves into the second half of the year, I am pleased to announce that corporate sponsors Blockbuster Video, SF Muni, Odwalla, Amtrak, and others will join the effort. Talks continue with Wherehouse Records, RoundTable Pizza, and the San Francisco Giants. We are beginning to see more press coverage of the contributions the arts as a whole make to our state.

With additional funding by the Packard and Irvine Foundations the California Arts Initiative commissioned the first-ever scientific survey of public attitudes towards the arts.

**T**his survey, just completed, will give us new tools and understanding of where the arts are within the pantheon of public priorities. The best news is that public support for the arts is significantly higher and stronger than any of us have thought. I would like to share with you just a few of the remarkable findings from this report:

- \* 75% say that the arts improve academic performance in children;
- \* an astounding 90% say the arts are extremely or very important;
- \* 68% say the arts are as, or more, important as academics;
- \* 71% think the arts help children to develop social skills;

- \* 74% say the arts improve the quality of a child's overall education;
- \* 64% think the arts help make children better citizens;
- \* 63% say the arts help prepare children for college.

And here's very good news for the arts - 78% of all California citizens say they would be willing to pay \$5 more per year in state income taxes, *if* that money was allocated to the arts.

Yet despite all these accomplishments, despite how far we have come, as the poet said, "we have miles to go before we sleep."

While funding is dramatically increasing, the demand for arts services is outpacing our resources. The Organizational Support Program this year had \$35 million in peer panel approved requests, and only \$7 million to address that need. The pool of organizations no longer applying because of their perception that funding is inadequate grows at a rate we can only guess at.

Our support to State Local Partners remains stagnant at \$40,000 per county, wholly inadequate in the smaller, rural and poorer areas of the state.

We are only scratching the surface at partnerships with industry. We have begun to expand our role over the years as a major player in the tourism field, yet we are still marginalized within the travel industry itself.

We provide technical assistance to improve our management skills, but we ignore the problem of systemic turnover in our ranks because of inadequate and insulting levels of pay and compensation.

The media continues to ignore us, even though in terms of sheer numbers we attract as many people as sports or entertainment. Apart from PBS coverage, we don't exist on television.

Many of our best touring artists must go out-of-state, at least part of the year, to earn decent fees to allow them to continue to tour.

Our support to public art programs is virtually non-existent, and our support for folk arts is little better. Issues that affect our future languish because we lack the time and resources to address them - chief among which is where will the arts administrative leaders of tomorrow come from?

*But we ignore the problem of systemic turnover in our ranks because of inadequate and insulting levels of pay and compensation.*

Our efforts at increased visibility must be the beginning of a multiple decade campaign to compete with the plethora of other worthy causes and investments. We must brand the arts if we are ever to compete in the sophisticated game of advertising and publicity.

And underlying all of the obstacles facing us remains our lack of true community. We speak of the arts, yet the notion of an arts community is a fiction we have deceived ourselves into believing is a fact. It is beyond the Emperor having no clothes. The Emperor has been naked for so long, we are in danger of making nudity a fashion statement.

We have the beginnings of that community - beginnings that have grown over the past four years, beginnings clearly in evidence by those of you in the room today. But they are only beginnings, and we need to advance to the next stage.

We need to develop mechanisms and increase ways we can communicate, convene, collaborate, and coalesce around shared objectives and mutual concerns. We need to organize ourselves to take advantage of our collective strength, and marshal the public support that already exists - so that others can no longer take advantage of us. We need to consolidate back office functions to reduce costs and implement other business-based cost saving devices.

We need to embrace each other, and look outward at the obstacles facing us, instead of turning on each other and looking out only for each of our separate interests.

We need to step back from the legacy of defining our success in terms of expanded programming, for which no one ever offers us expanded operations funding to execute that programming.

We spend funds to fill empty seats, yet fund new projects that directly compete with those empty chairs. We need to elevate the marketing and advocacy functions of our organizations to equal the administrative and creative roles we play. We need to champion the least of our community, nurture the underserved, and underdeveloped arts groups within our community, so as to gain the resources that will expand the biggest and best of our members. We need to speak with one voice - at least in championing the value the arts play.

*The Emperor has been naked for so long, we are in danger of making nudity a fashion statement.*

We need to demand fairness, equity, and access for all cultural institutional capital needs. We need to challenge the system and its prerogatives where that system is bad public policy. Those small have-not organizations without political power need to have our collective voice speak on their behalf so that their very real and equally pressing needs are addressed. But as we take their side, we do so not at the expense of the larger institutions among us whose

need is also real and pressing. We must not allow ourselves to become divided one against the other. The choice is not either / or - all of the arts must advance.

I am an arts administrator, and proud of it. As Director of the CAC I think my job is to provide leadership and a vision for our future, so I offer for your consideration today my sense of where we might go.

With apologies to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy, because I don't know how else to say this, I have a dream.

A dream that in ten or twenty years I can stand at the back of a hall three or four times bigger than this one and listen to the new generation of arts leaders. And on that day, in that room, someone else will stand before the arts community and will tell them this:

The arts have never been healthier. The population has reached 44 million, and funding to the arts has risen to \$10 per capita. Every county in the state has a sophisticated performing arts facility, and every county has a dedicated arts education complex. Arts organizations now own 60% of the buildings in which they reside, no longer paying rent but now building equity. There are lines and waiting lists for theatres, dance companies, symphonies and museums.

There is an Artist in Residence in every one of the state's 10,000 schools. The Arts are integrated into the

core curriculum and there are credentialed teachers for every arts subject. Teachers no longer need dig into their own pockets to pay for supplies. The arts are recognized as absolutely essential to the learning process and to what Californians value.

Creativity thrives in the state, and the Arts work hand in hand with their equal partners in the entertainment and high tech industries. The travel industry again cites cultural attractions as the number one booster of tourism in the state.

Local arts agency funding is at \$250,000 per State Local Partner, including City agencies which have grown to 125. The infrastructure of umbrella service organizations for ethnic and discipline area continues to grow and thrive with collaboration among all the various constituencies.

The Major Institution Fund, created a decade ago, now provides on average \$5 million per institution and our biggest museums, operas, symphonies, and dance companies are the envy of the world. Half of these major institutions are multicultural. The OSP program budget tops \$150 million dollars and that funding leverages an additional \$150 million in matching support.

The Cultural Facilities Fund is now 20 years old and over the past two decades over a quarter of a billion dollars of public and private sector money has gone to capital improvements for arts groups of all sizes in all sections of the state. There hasn't been a cultural pork bill introduced in the legislature in well over a decade. There has been no need.

This year's California Medal of the Arts Ceremony, once again broadcast on network television, had a national audience just shy of the Oscar telecast, reflecting the continuing trend of public interest in the arts. At this year's ceremony, Governor Adam Schiff awarded the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Medal for support for the arts to former First Lady of the United States, Sharon Davis.

Multicultural arts organizations have grown to the equal of the major institutions. And there is increasing free exchange between all the cultural treasures within the state.

The fund for touring and presenting tops \$25 million dollars and we are no longer losing our most gifted performing artists to other states. No one pays a more competitive fee than does California.

Public art continues to grow and 200 local jurisdictions receive state support to augment local commitments. There are rotating curated arts exhibits in 900 state buildings.

Artists have more venues and opportunities to market their creations than ever before, reflecting the increasing esteem and value California society accords to artists.

Folk arts and native American and California artists have finally earned the measure of respect for their cultural contributions so long denied them by an indifferent community.

The inventories of the great museums no longer lay dormant in basements but now tour to the rural and outlying areas of the state to local satellite museums.

Despite the rapid rise in arts organizations, growing now to a healthy, vibrant, self-sufficient 25,000 organizations, there continues to be more young people who want to become arts administrators than they



are openings. In part that is because of the rapidly rising pay and compensation packages offered arts administrators - in part because Arts Administrators like teachers, are now valued by Californians at least as much as celebrities with beautiful faces, and athletes who can slam dunk.

California now has cultural exchange programs with over 40 nations across the globe, and the arts are a major player in supporting international trade with our state.

The Department of Cultural Affairs, created in the early part of the century, uniting the Arts Council, Film Commission, historical boards, libraries, and elevated to Cabinet status ten years ago, has grown to a staff of over 500, with branch offices in Los Angeles, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Fresno, San Jose, San Francisco, and Redding.

The Arts Youth Movement, started five years ago, and so instrumental in making Arts Day a state holiday, continues to grow and now 500,000 high school and college students claim membership in the organization.

Some dream, huh? Ambitious? You bet. Attainable? Absolutely. In fact the only thing that can keep us from taking the arts in California from here to there is ourselves. Like the line in the Dylan song: "No one can beat you, no one can defeat you, except the thoughts of yourself feeling bad." I know this sounds like so much hyperbole to some of you.

Four years ago Paul Minicucci and I hatched a plan with then Senator Henry Mello to take arts funding in California to one dollar per capita. I was new to the arts then, and people had just come off having spent five years and all their energy just defending the existence of the NEA and the CAC. They patted me on the head, and told me that was a nice dream. But a lot of you here today thought it was a good dream. And you made it your dream. And together YOU made it happen. And now we are past that.

So how do we make this dream happen? I'll tell you how I think we do it. We do it the same way all profound changes and big dreams are realized. We do it by a sheer act of will. We do it by everyone in this room today making a promise - a pledge - that they will keep this dream in their hearts, that they will go home and make converts one at a time. That they will seize every opportunity to take us one step closer to the dream. We do it by speaking with one voice, by working together. We do it by everyone understanding that the health of *any* arts organization, of *every* arts organization, no matter how small, no matter how big, is critical to the health of the arts as a whole. We do it by nurturing each other, by letting go of whatever egos and insecurities we have, by abandoning the notion of territoriality, by reaching out to each other in support. We do it by acting in concert and becoming a true community.

*We need to step back from the legacy of defining our success in terms of expanded programming, for which no one ever offers us expanded operations funding to execute that programming.*

Because if we don't unite, that dream and all of our dreams will wither on the vine. But if we make that promise and keep it, it is a dream that cannot be denied.

We do it by camping out at local media outlets and refusing to take no for an answer, demanding they take a look at what we have to offer and the public support behind us and GIVE US COVERAGE.

We do it by demanding not just decent wages, but competitive wages, so that we may attract and keep the talent we need. We do by respecting ourselves so that we can demand the respect of others. We do it by forming alliances with those that have a stake in our success.

There is a famous story about Winston Churchill being invited to deliver the commencement address at a small college in the center of England. The great man had a reputation for his oratory skills, and the dean of the college thought he had scored a real coup in getting Sir Winston to address his charges. What the dean forgot was the Churchill also had the reputation for quaffing a few, which he did the night before. Showing up the next morning three sheets to the wind, Churchill was barely able to climb the three steps to the dais. Summoning all his strength, glassy-eyed, his breathing labored, Churchill held onto the podium for dear life as he looked out at the sea of innocent faces and said this to them: "Don't quit. Don't quit. Never. Never. Never." Whereupon he promptly passed out stone cold on the platform. The assembled local dignitaries may have been shocked, but they shouldn't have been disappointed, because that is the best advice anyone can give.

*Those small have-not organizations without political power need to have our collective voice speak on their behalf so that their very real and equally pressing needs are addressed. But as we take their side, we do so not at the expense of the larger institutions among us whose need is also real and pressing. We must not allow ourselves to become divided one against the other.*

We get to our dream by heeding this advice, and we take it one step at a time. We build on each success. Many if not most of us will be long gone from the field when this dream comes true, but it will be on the foundation we lay down, that those who come after us will build on. We do it by going back to our communities and making the time to meet with each other - and *all* of us come to those gatherings and we brainstorm, and recruit, and lobby, and advocate and we take the arts to that dream community by community.

**W**e teach ourselves whatever advocacy skills we need to learn. We organize ourselves and make whatever sacrifices are necessary. I don't have to ask you how many of us here today are members of the Arts Advocates, because I already know the answer. Almost none of us are. We need to stop letting other people fight our battles for us, stop abrogating responsibility for doing our jobs for us. And make no mistake about it - no matter what you do - administrator, creative director, fundraiser, advisor, consultant, artist - selling the value of the arts is everyone's job, and we must understand and embrace that a portion of our time must be spent as advocates. The same few people have carried the ball for us all for far too long, and we will never get to our dream until we shake off the yoke of acting like Oliver Twist, holding out our

meager bowl of gruel, begging: "Please sir, may I have some more." We get to this dream by demanding respect - we do it with style, élan, and grace - we are the arts after all, but we do it forcefully and resolutely, without apology, and with determination.

*We do it by everyone understanding that the health of any arts organization, of every arts organization, no matter how small, no matter how big, is critical to the health of the arts as a whole.*

**A**lan Ziter is the Chair of the Arts Advocates. He will follow me with directions about the rally. Alan, here is my check for \$250 - sign me up as member of Arts Advocates as of today. And I make this pledge to you -



I will be a dues paying member for the rest of my life. Long after I am gone from the field, I will pay my dues, because I know that as a part of a bigger whole, I will have an effect. I ask every one of you in this room today to join me. Each of us can afford \$25 or \$50 dollars. You can forego a movie and a dinner. It would be nice if every organization joined, but we can, as individuals, make this happen. You wouldn't be here today if you didn't care about the arts. If everybody here today paid \$25, the arts would have an instant \$25,000 war chest that could grow to ten times that amount in a year.

*We do it by demanding not just decent wages, but competitive wages, so that we may attract and keep the talent we need.*

But don't just write the check, form local chapters of the Advocacy movement, and get involved. Join the Advocates Board and help determine policy and priorities.

Until the arts community is willing to become politically active - to support candidates that support the arts - and demonstrate that support with our wallets, then we will simply NOT be players in the system. That's just the way it is. It doesn't matter who you support with your checkbook, for the arts should and ought to be a bi-partisan issue. What matters is that you get involved, and you make those you support understand that the arts are why you are getting involved.

**W**e tell anyone who will listen that the arts impart the very skills our kids need to succeed in the new global marketplace - team problem solving, risk-taking, out-of-the-box thinking. We need to be team problem solvers, we need to take risks, we need to think out of the box. We need to follow our own advice.

And we need to dream.

When you cross the bridge to Fantasyland at Disneyworld you hear Jimminy Cricket sing: "A dream is a wish your heart makes." I can't make my dream come true, but you can. I hope you will make it your dream too.

*Selling the value of the arts is everyone's job.*

In Thailand, the Thai people have a gesture called the "wei". Like other signs in Asian cultures, it consists of extending the hands, prayer like, with a slight bow of the head. It is a sign of respect, not supplication. Differential as much to character and deed as to station, it is a simple, yet eloquent way to pay tribute and honor. The Thais are raised using this gesture,

and although you see it every day, they use it judiciously, because it must be earned. It is a way to say thank you and pay homage that is often far more meaningful than mere words can express.

When you go back to your offices Monday, I hope you'll keep the promise you make today. I hope you'll treat it like a holy jihad, because what's at stake is nothing less than the legacy we will leave our children. It is the arts that last, and it is the arts that will take us that closer to humanity's finer aspirations, and away from our baser instincts. To paraphrase the biblical imperative - the arts will beat the swords, not into plowshares, but this time into paintbrushes.

**S**o when you feel low and defeated, when you feel like Sisyphus trying to get that rock over the mountain, remember that you are part of something bigger than yourself, that what you do matters profoundly. Few

people get to be part of something that holds the promise of affecting human behavior, so stand tall, and proud. Don't let anyone demean you, for if they dismiss you, they dismiss the arts, and reveal their ignorance. And when you feel frustrated and dejected, remember a 1,000 other people made the same promise you did today. And in six months, one convert at a time, there will be 2,000 people committed to this dream. And in a year, 10,000. And step by step we will get to - not where we want to go, but to where we must go - because of what is at stake. And that together, we can keep that rock from falling back down that hill. Together we can make that dream come true.

And on those long days, when you know you have a 12-hour day coming up tomorrow, and you are exhausted and need to go home, stay 15 minutes longer. Make one more phone call, write one more letter, reach out to one more convert, and take us one small step closer to the dream.

And heed the advice of Churchill. Don't quit. Don't quit. Never!

And if you do that, if you do all that, then in a decade or two, maybe, just maybe, a fat, grumpy old man will get his wish - to stand quietly, unnoticed in the shadows at the back of a hall, much bigger than this one, and listen to that new generation of arts leaders - to those new custodians and defenders of that most sacred and precious of all the human gifts, the creative spirit -- as the people in that room, on that day, recount, with a sense of awe, that magic time at the beginning of this century, when the people in this room, on this day, made a promise.

*We need to be team problem solvers, we need to take risks, we need to think out of the box. We need to follow our own advice.*

And month by month, step by step, year after year, through an act of sheer will, through sacrifice and determination, through hard work and working together, they kept that promise and they took the arts in California from here all the way to that dream.

And if that day ever comes, I'll stand at the back of that room, with a smile on my face, and a deep sense of pride in my heart, and probably a tear in my eye, and I will proudly, proudly raise my hands in the sign of the wai, in silent tribute and honor and respect to each one of you in this room today, as I do right now, in admiration and acknowledgement and grateful appreciation for helping me - for, allowing me to be part, at the beginning, of making that dream - come true.

*Thank you.*



